

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002643/24  
to the Commission  
João Oliveira (The Left)  
(23 November 2024)**

*Subject:* Bluetongue epidemic — challenges facing sheep farmers in Portugal

Sheep farming in Portugal has been severely hit by the bluetongue virus epidemic, which, according to the National Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Credit of Portugal, ‘has wiped out thousands of sheep across the country and could spread to bovine animals’.

According to the National Confederation of Agriculture (CNA), ‘data from the system on the collection of the cadavers of animals that die on farms (SIRCA) show that the disease is out of control and containment measures are needed right away’.

There are also concerns that SIRCA could collapse.

Both bodies are calling for an immediate and free vaccination campaign and for extraordinary support to cover animal losses, as well as treatment and prevention costs, given that the costs arising from this situation are beyond the means of the vast majority of farms.

As farmers face an unanticipated decline in livestock numbers, the CNA is also warning about the risk of them being penalised by the blanket application of rules under the common agricultural policy (CAP).

In view of the above:

1. Is the Commission aware of a request from the Portuguese Government for the deployment of resources to this end?
2. Will it allow measures adapting the CAP rules to avoid penalising farmers affected by a decline in livestock numbers?

Submitted: 23.11.2024

**Answer given by Mr Hansen on behalf of the European Commission  
(28 February 2025)**

1. The Commission is not aware of any specific request from the Portuguese Government for the deployment of additional EU resources related to spread of bluetongue virus.

As referred to in reply to Written Questions E-001845/2024, E-002156/2024, E-002019/2024 and E-001850/2024 bluetongue virus being a subject to optional eradication, EU funding for Bluetongue Virus, including vaccination, is not planned for the 2025-2027 period for eradication programmes in accordance with EU rules <sup>(1)</sup>, nor for emergency measures. Financial resources are allocated to the control and eradication of other major priority animal diseases.

As mentioned in reply to Written Questions E-001819/2024, P-002410/2024; E-002019/2024 and E-002156/2024, support to farmers can be provided under the common market Organisation, Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plans, rural development programmes, and in line with Union state aid rules.

2. CAP financial rules <sup>(2)</sup> already allow farmers who have been unable to fulfil all their CAP requirements due to exceptional and unforeseeable events outside their control not to lose CAP support. The application of this concept is decided by Member States based on relevant evidence and the legal requirements for its application.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) and the work programmes (adopted as Commission Implementing Decision C(2024) 2098 of 2.8.2024 for 2025-2027).

<sup>(2)</sup> Articles 3(2) and 59(5)(a) of Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013, OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 187.